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board." Down to the end of the seventeenth century signature to the Confession of Faith was one of the conditions of appointment. During the eighteenth century it practically ceased to be mandatory, although there are several instances of the signature as late as 1860. Among topics of particular interest may be mentioned the S. P. C. K. schools, which had their origin in 1790 by a grant to incorporate the "Society for the Propagating of Christian Knowledge in Scotland"; the distinguished part played by David Stow in connection with the training of teachers; and the list of Scotsmen, eminent in almost every branch of academic culture, who contributed to the intellectual brilliancy of the eighteenth century.

The fourth period, which occupies about one-third of the volume, is treated with greater detail and in a more interesting manner than the earlier periods. The author has had a close and practical acquaintance with the school and university life of both Scotland and England for more than fifty years; consequently this part of the history may be considered not so much the compilation of a painstaking historian as the judicious interpretation of the progress made in the educational institutions of Scotland in recent years by one who has had no small part in their development. The appendix rises above the ordinary repository for statistical and other technical matter; it consists of short treatises, by experts, on such topics as primary schools, the system of training teachers (1905), secondary schools, the present state of technical education, and the universities.

RAYMOND MCFARLAND

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Handwriting. By EDWARD L. THORNDIKE (Teachers College Record, XI, 2). New York: Columbia University Press, 1910. Pp. 93. With many charts. \$0.30.

The author describes a method of testing handwriting and reports some results of the application of the method to several school systems. The object is to find a means of grading a specimen or group of specimens of writing. For this purpose a scale is constructed, consisting of samples representing regularly ascending degrees of excellence as measured by the qualities legibility, beauty, and character. The samples which represent these different degrees are selected by a group of "competent judges" from a large number of specimens of writing. In some cases two or three samples of different styles of writing are given to represent a given grade. This scale is to serve as a standard by which to set requirements for the attainment of schools, successive grades in a school, individuals, written examinations, etc., and as a standard for the comparison of different school systems or methods of teaching.

By the application of such a scale as this and by a measurement of the average speed the writing in seven school systems was examined. As a result of this examination Mr. Thorndike concludes that six of the seven school systems using various methods do not differ materially in the quality of writing produced at any particular speed. He found enormous individual variations, and announces that the rapid writers are in general also the best. From the fact that the writing of most adults is poorer than that of many children of the upper grades, the

conclusion is drawn that the school develops writing to an unnecessary degree of refinement. No correlation was found between excellence of writing and intellectual ability in adult women students.

FRANK N. FREEMAN

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Practical Algebra. First-Year Course. By JOS. V. COLLINS. New York: American Book Co., 1910. Pp. 301. \$0.85.

Professor Collins presents in his recent text, *Practical Algebra*, a book which will be appreciated by the progressive teacher of the subject. He has retained enough of the traditional theoretical course to make the development of the subject logically sound, and yet he has incorporated enough of the modern methods and topics to make the subject interesting and vital.

For the sake of brevity we shall simply enumerate the features of the book especially worthy of attention. The commendable features are: (1) the historical notes, especially such a table as presented on p. 275—a much-neglected but important topic of mathematics courses; (2) the selection of problems which emphasize the correlation of the branches of mathematics, physics, domestic science, and manual training; (3) the graphic work, scattered throughout the text where needed; (4) the needed emphasis on the importance of checking work; (5) the geometric representation of algebraic products; (6) the treatment of factoring, not too exhaustive in first presentation and given immediate application; (7) the list of common errors in fraction work; (8) the use of formulas derived from various sources for evaluation, transformation, and translation, both from English into algebraic symbolism and vice versa.

No book is perfect, and we shall consider the following as the defects of the text in question: (1) chaps. x and xi should have a more exhaustive treatment; (2) the formulas and applied problems and the formal drill problems seem insufficient in number; (3) there are no miscellaneous reviews. But surely we can forgive and forget these defects, which are minor in comparison with the numerous important advantages listed above. We repeat our commendation of the selections of problems, historical material, treatment of graphic work, and emphasis on checking.

C. B. WALSH

THE ETHICAL CULTURE SCHOOL
NEW YORK CITY

The Teaching Botanist. By W. F. GANONG. New York: Macmillan, 1910. Pp. xi+439. \$1.25 net.

Botany for High Schools. By GEORGE F. ATKINSON. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1910. Pp. xvi+493. \$1.25.

Laboratory Botany. By WILLARD N. CLUTE. Boston: Ginn & Co., 1909. Pp. xiv+177. \$0.75.

These three books represent late contributions to the teaching of botany. All three authors are known to the botanical public and all have published books before this.